

CONTENTS

Credits	4
---------------	---

INTRODUCTION6

What Is an RPG?	10
Getting Started.....	12
What's in This Book?	13
Why Machines?	13

PLAYING THE GAME14

Performing Tasks	17
The Test	18
Opposed Tests	20
Creating Characters	21
Step 1: Determine Characteristics	21
Step 2: Choose Features	22
Step 3: Record Equipment	23
Step 4: Record Traumas	23
The Character Sheet	24
Categories	24
Features	25
Positive Features	25
Negative Features	26
Equipment and Supplies	27
Gear	27
Weapons	28
Armor	29
Stress, Death, and Traumas	30
Stress	30
Death	31
Traumas	32
Conflict	34
Timing	34
Tasks	35

RUNNING THE GAME38

Running the Game	41
Story Structure	41
Encounters	41
Narrative	42
Running Tests	44
When to Add Positive Dice	44
When to Add Negative Dice	44
Determining Results	45

Managing NPCs	46
NPC Profiles	46
The Campaign	47
Campaign Length	47
Advancing Characters	47

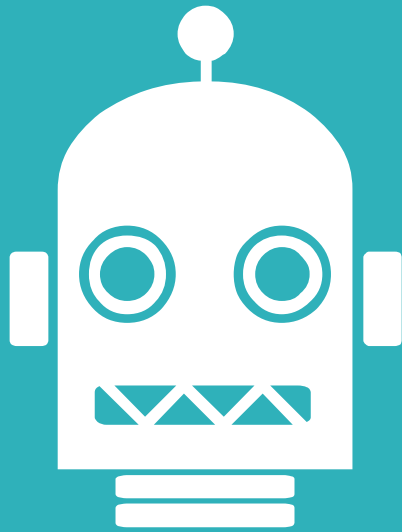
SCENARIOS48

The Modular Menace (Apocalypse).....	52
The Experience.....	54
The Truth.....	57
Timeline.....	58
The Modular Menace (Post-Apocalypse).....	64
A Well-Oiled Machine	66
Logical Conclusions (Apocalypse)	70
The Experience.....	72
The Truth.....	73
Timeline.....	77
Logical Conclusions (Post-Apocalypse).....	82
One Nation, Under Cyborgs	84
Death from Above (Apocalypse)	88
The Experience.....	90
The Truth.....	92
Timeline.....	94
Death from Above (Post-Apocalypse).....	100
Welcome the Machine	101
Heavy Metal (Apocalypse).....	106
The Experience.....	108
The Truth.....	109
Timeline.....	112
Heavy Metal (Post-Apocalypse).....	118
Living Simply?.....	120
Nanopocalypse (Apocalypse)	124
The Experience.....	126
The Truth.....	127
Timeline.....	130
Nanopocalypse (Post-Apocalypse)	136
A Grey World.....	138
Index	142
Character Sheet.....	144



INTRODUCTION





"We relied on 'em for everything. Every damned thing. What are we gonna do now without 'em? ...no, 'without 'em' is too easy. We ain't rid of 'em just yet. They're still out there, killin' us off, one by one."

—An unknown survivor of the world's first (and last) technological cataclysm.

The others scream as I gun the engine right at him. I'm not sure if they are yelling for me to stop or are just surprised. The car hits the man in the suit and he goes tumbling over the hood, sunglasses flying; he cracks the windshield and rolls off.

I slam on the brakes and look in the rearview. He's lying a few yards behind the car, suit in shreds and blood on the asphalt. The others yell for me to go, but I wait. As he starts to move, I put the car in reverse and hit the accelerator, backing over him at twenty miles an hour with a loud thud as the car jounces over his body. Everyone is still yelling, so I pull a quick turn—jumping the curb with a screech of metal on concrete—and we take off down the street.

"Who the hell was that?" Tommy shouts in a panic.

"What the hell was it?" Priya corrects.

I grip the wheel, white-knuckled, and speed down the street. I look in the mirror and go cold as I see there's no body in the road.

I glance down at the dash display and realize it's only been about ten minutes. Ten minutes ago, everything was fine. And normal. We were in the middle of our regular game when there was a knock at the door. We assumed it was the pizza guy. Dave, the GM, got up to answer it—a sure sign he's stalling for ideas—but it was a weird guy in a suit with sunglasses (at night!), looking like some kind of Fed.

The suit stated Dave's full name, as a question, for confirmation. Dave nodded, and the guy grabbed him by the throat, lifting him off the floor like he didn't weigh a thing—and Dave is not a small guy. He choked and struggled as the suit stood motionless, just staring at him.

Obviously, we all freaked out. Jessie was the first one to actually do anything useful. She ran at the guy and grabbed his arm, trying to wrestle Dave free. The suit acted like he didn't even notice her for a moment, then effortlessly swatted her into a wall. As the rest of us helped her to her feet, Tommy swung a bat at the attacker, and the wood just splintered against his head.

The suit dropped Dave's lifeless body on the floor, and that's when we ran for the back door.

Now, speeding away from where the suit's body wasn't, Priya is on the phone with 911. Jessie and Tommy are in the back seat. Jessie's in a daze.

"I think she has a concussion," Tommy says, propping Jessie up and waving his hand in front of her eyes. "We gotta get to the hospital."

Priya's practically yelling into the phone—"Yes, a murder! Are you listening to me?"—when there's a gunshot and the front left tire pops. I lose control of the car, spinning over the curb and into a tree.

My vision swims as I push the airbag out of the way and see the man approaching us, walking casually, no sign of pain. But he's not a man. The suit's in tatters, but so is the flesh on his face and hand. It's torn away, and under the blood I see light from the streetlamp glinting off metal, machine parts moving and whirring.

He—it—levels a pistol at the cracked window, at my head. He's saying something, but I can't make out the words as my vision gradually fades, I slump forward, and everything goes black.

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME to **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES**. By picking up this book, you've doomed yourself and everyone you know to a horrible end. But don't worry—it's all in good fun. **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES** is a roleplaying game in which you and your friends try to survive **THE END OF THE WORLD** and not get shot by cyborgs, run over by sentient trucks, or disassembled by nanomachines (all key to survival, of course). Unlike other games, **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES** has players portray not mighty heroes or dangerous outlaws, but themselves! Likewise, the locations and other characters they encounter during the game are largely based on people and places they know in real life. So, in a game of **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES**, the players portray themselves trying to survive as out-of-control machines attack their town (and the rest of the world), running and fighting their way through familiar streets during a horrifying event. An easy-to-learn, flexible, and narrative-focused rule set propels the action along, keeping the focus on the story and the players' actions, without bogging things down in unnecessary bookkeeping.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THE END OF THE WORLD?

REVOLT OF THE MACHINES is the fourth in a series of roleplaying games called **THE END OF THE WORLD**. Each game in the series is a stand-alone play experience, but they share a set of simple, narrative rules and the titular theme. Each book in the series explores a different, exciting way the world of humans might come to an end. This book deals with—obviously—machines, and with how intelligent computers, out-of-control robots, and other technological marvels might end human civilization. Other books cover different threats, and like this one, each explores multiple scenarios involving different takes on the threat.

If you've ever wondered how you and your friends would fare during a machine uprising, keep reading and find out!

WHAT IS AN RPG?

Although millions of words have been spent debating the answer to that question (mostly on Internet forums), for our purposes, a roleplaying game, or RPG, is a shared storytelling experience in which players build a narrative by taking on the roles of characters in a fictionalized situation. A set of rules helps the players to determine the outcomes of the various actions they take and decisions they make (and hopefully helps them avoid the kinds of arguments you got into while playing pretend as a kid). In addition to rules and a setting, an RPG has three key elements: some players (three to five is usually a good number), a Game Master, and a scenario.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

Each player creates a Player Character, also known as a PC, to control during the game. The PCs are the protagonists of the story, and the players' primary means by which to influence its events. Each PC has game characteristics that represent their relative strengths and weaknesses and determine their likelihood to succeed at various tasks. Most RPGs would mention here that PCs have their own backstories and motivations, but in **THE END OF THE WORLD**, the PCs are based on the players themselves! Obviously, getting into the head of, well, yourself, should come more naturally than contemplating the mindset of a thousand-year-old elven warrior-mage.

Like the characters in any good horror movie, the PCs are not the first people to die. But they also might not all survive. It is **THE END OF THE WORLD**, after all.

THE GAME MASTER

One person in the group must take on the vaunted mantle of Game Master, or GM, rather than create a Player Character. Although the GM is taking part in the game, we make a distinction between the GM and players because the GM is running the game and not just playing it. The GM describes the world, narrates the story, presents obstacles and challenges for the PCs, and portrays all the story's other characters (known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs). The GM is also responsible for applying the rules of the game and making a decision when a question about the rules arises.

Being the GM comes with more responsibility, but it can also be very rewarding. Plus, in this game, it means you get to describe all kinds of horrible things happening to your friends without it being "weird."



SCENARIOS

Obviously, a roleplaying game isn't going to be very exciting if the PCs don't do anything. And while PCs do have a tendency to cause trouble, it's generally best if the GM is prepared with some sort of situation with which to challenge them. A game scenario is like a movie's story: it describes what is happening and the sorts of conflicts and enemies facing the protagonists. While other games often feature adventures in which the PCs attempt to achieve some noteworthy goal, this is not the focus of **THE END OF THE WORLD**. Instead, the PCs are simply trying to survive to see another day.

This book includes five scenarios describing different ways machines might bring about **THE END OF THE WORLD** as we know it. These scenarios include all the information the GM needs about the nature of the machines, the circumstances leading to their betrayal of humanity, and their capabilities. However, the GM needs to fill in the details regarding people and places, since the game takes place wherever the players happen to be. In addition to using these scenarios, GMs can always come up with their own takes on a machine revolt to really keep players on their toes.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT?

THE END OF THE WORLD is different from other RPGs you might have played for a few reasons. Possibly the most unique aspect of the game is the nature of the Player Characters. Rather than being heroic (or anti-heroic) characters with special skills and abilities based on a sci-fi or fantasy setting, or a genre of fiction, the PCs in **THE END OF THE WORLD** are actually based on the players. In effect, the PCs are not only the players' avatars in the game world: they are the players, or at least fictionalized versions. And the game world isn't a far-off land or alternate universe: it's wherever the players really live. The events of the game unfold in the players' town or city, with the GM describing the destruction wrought by the apocalypse.

Because of its theme, **THE END OF THE WORLD** is intended for shorter, more defined play experiences than many RPGs, which assume long-running campaigns or sweeping story arcs. Depending on your group's preferences and play style, you could wrap up an apocalyptic scenario over the course of two or three sessions, or even a single night. Of course, the game can go on for as long as it needs to, and it could last much longer if everyone enjoys experiencing the apocalypse and the following years in detail—and the PCs live that long.

Whereas RPGs often focus on some goal or mission, be it saving the world from supervillains or just acquiring a lot of treasure, **THE END OF THE WORLD** is really about putting the PCs in a difficult situation and seeing how they deal with it. There's no stopping the apocalypse—the PCs are regular people, and the best they can hope for is to be among the few to survive.

THE END OF THE WORLD features a fast, narrative rule set to keep the players engaged and the story moving. While tactical, detailed combat works great for some games, that's not the focus here. You don't want to get into a stand-up fight with a killer cyborg, and there's no such thing when it comes to an aerial combat drone. You want to avoid being shot, blown up, or crushed, and to just keep moving. If you get trapped in a fight with murderous technology, whether a swarm of nanobots or an hypersonic drone, you've already lost.

The same goes for the other actions PCs might attempt. We know more or less what we're capable of, so with PCs representing the players, a quick roll is all it takes to determine whether they succeed at a task and what the outcome is. Also, PCs in this game aren't powerful heroes: they can't be hit with swords or bullets and lose some arbitrary life points, with no other effects. PCs get worn down, not just from injuries in fights, but also from the strain of dealing with the events of the apocalypse and with their fellow survivors. The cumulative effects

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PLAY?

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION

You'll need the following to play **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES**:

- ☺ This book (check!)
- ☺ At least two other people (try posing a series of emotionally charged questions to verify they aren't cyborgs).
- ☺ Three or four hours set aside to play (or more, if the world really has ended and you have lots of free time).
- ☺ A handful of six-sided dice of two different colors (or different sizes, just as long as you can easily tell them apart).
- ☺ Some paper, pencils, and erasers (ink is a little too permanent for use on a character sheet).
- ☺ Snacks (oil and RAM chips don't count).

Snazzy-looking character sheets and other play aids are not necessary, but they sure are fun. You can photocopy them from the back of this book or download them from the Fantasy Flight Games website (www.FantasyFlightGames.com). Maps of your town are available at your nearest convenience store. Although not necessary to play this game, a map will be very handy when your GPS device turns against you.

of stress and trauma help to reinforce the grim reality of being there when the world ends, and they have a significant impact on the ongoing story. PCs with a lot of injuries or stress might decide it's better to hole up and wait for help than try to make it to some other destination.

Players use the same characters for all five scenarios—after all, they're just playing themselves. Each scenario presents a completely different take on a machine rebellion, making for five distinct game experiences. In effect, each scenario hits the reset button and changes reality. This puts the players in the unusual situation of experiencing a somewhat similar challenge, but with different details. This keeps things fresh without requiring the players to learn new rules or a new setting, or even to create new characters. Of course, the PCs, like the players, are going to be familiar with the idea of apocalyptic machine revolts. But they can't know all the details of the particular machines they face. Figuring out how to evade them and stay alive—or maybe even incapacitate them—presents a great opportunity for players to use their own knowledge of the genre without “cheating.”

GETTING STARTED

We know you're anxious to start playing, but first things first. The Game Master, probably whoever bought this book, needs to become familiar with its contents. In particular, the GM should read **Chapter I: Playing the Game** and **Chapter II: Running the Game** (for obvious reasons). In addition, the GM should completely read whichever scenario is to be played first. **Chapter III: Scenarios** includes five different, unrelated scenarios. These can be run in any order, so it's not necessary for the GM to read them all before the first play session. Of course, it doesn't hurt to read them all beforehand, if the GM has time. One advantage this offers is that pieces from different scenarios can be mixed and matched if the GM wishes.

The GM should be familiar with the rules but doesn't have to memorize them before playing. It's not a bad idea for the players to read the rules as well, but it's not necessary. By no means, though, should players read **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios**. A big part of the fun is figuring out what kind of technology the PCs are up against, and looking at the scenarios would ruin that. So, if you're a player, do not read the scenarios! That would spoil everything. If you're the GM, read the scenarios all you want.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It should go without saying that the events of **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES** are fictitious. While technology is advancing at an unprecedented rate and has many applications, for both good and ill, the particular technologies in this book don't exist (at least not yet) and the world (probably) won't end because of them. This is a game, and it's purely meant for fun. Of course, the resemblance to real people, both human and cyborg, is not a coincidence in this case, which can blur the lines in a way other games don't. Before playing, it's a good idea to talk with the other players about expectations for the game, to make sure no one is upset by events described during play. If some players aren't comfortable with detailed descriptions of people they know being disassembled at the molecular level by nanomachines, leave it vague. If some want to play more fictionalized versions of themselves than the others, that's fine. The events of a technological apocalypse are pretty horrifying if taken literally, so don't be afraid to approach them in a lighthearted, even comical way, if that's what everyone prefers. The important thing is that everyone has fun, and the PCs all have at least a fighting chance.

THEY CAN'T DO THAT, DAVE

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

REVOLT OF THE MACHINES is divided into three chapters. (It also includes lots of pictures so you don't get bored.) The GM should become familiar with the whole book, or at least the rules and the first scenario to be run, but players should absolutely not look at **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios** (especially not at the scenarios).

CHAPTER I: PLAYING THE GAME

This chapter describes the rules and core mechanics of the game, including everything the players and GM need to know to resolve actions, fight machines (or run away), and track the consequences of traumas and stress. It also explains how to create characters, including their characteristics, features, and equipment.

CHAPTER II: RUNNING THE GAME

Chapter II is specifically for the GM. It includes plenty of useful advice on running **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES**, including how to tailor the game to the players and town, pace the story and encounters, use the rules to enhance the story, address questions and disputes about the rules, and handle situations not covered by the rules.

CHAPTER III: SCENARIOS

The final chapter presents five different scenarios in which rebellious or out-of-control technology brings about **THE END OF THE WORLD**. The scenarios present different takes on the idea of a machine revolt—and what happens afterward. Each one features a different kind of threat, from a rogue military AI to sentient household robots and more. The scenarios each include all the information the GM needs about the technological threat, its weaknesses, and how things unfold once the invasion begins. Each scenario presents new surprises and challenges for players. Playing them all allows the players to see how different survival strategies work out and to explore different parts of their world during and after the apocalypse.

WHY MACHINES?

Why **REVOLT OF THE MACHINES**? The idea that technology is a double-edged sword, capable of both improving and harming human lives, is centuries old, and it has spawned countless debates. Speculative fiction, movies, philosophers, and technologists have explored myriad ways in which technology might betray humans or cause unintended harm, whether as a result of the freedom of choice that comes with true consciousness or due to a simple malfunction. In some portrayals, these incidents damage only a handful of people; in others, technology destroys the entire planet. Nevertheless, the core idea remains the same. It is a common theme familiar to players, regardless of the specifics, and likely one they have thought about on more than a few occasions.

The idea of machine revolt reflects our deepest fears about losing control of our own creations or rendering ourselves obsolete by surpassing nature. Technology is progressing at an astounding pace, and some of the possibilities this advancement presents are truly frightening. Of all the apocalyptic scenarios presented in popular media, a technological end is perhaps the most distressingly plausible. Technology allows for great destructive capability, as best exemplified by the atomic bomb. Even discounting weapons, new technologies often have dangerous potential applications or unanticipated effects. It's not hard to imagine that a true artificial intelligence might place its own interests above those of humanity, or that by pushing technological development too far, we risk creating devices we cannot control.

That sounds a little depressing, so here's a lighter take. Although the details vary, everyone is familiar with the concept of rebellious machines, from media going back to silent films and even before. When someone mentions a treacherous AI or rampaging robot, most people immediately have some idea of what to expect. This familiarity makes the game easier, allowing the GM to play around with familiar tropes in a new way or just to let the players experience their favorite stories of treacherous machines for themselves.

And most importantly, because robots are cool.